
Resolution

Lake Huron Outflows through the St. Clair River

Whereas, water levels on the upper Great Lakes (Superior, Michigan, Huron) have been extremely low since 2000, with Lake Superior establishing new record lows in August and September 2007; and

Whereas, the Union of Concerned Scientists, the Ecological Society of America and other researchers have predicted that the effects of global climate change in the Great Lakes region could include increased drought conditions, reduced ice cover, increased evaporation, rising lake temperatures and lowered lake levels; and

Whereas, the International Joint Commission (IJC) has initiated its Upper Great Lakes Study to investigate factors affecting water levels and flows on lakes Superior, Huron, Michigan and Erie, including physical processes affecting Lake Huron outflows through the St. Clair River, with an interim report scheduled to be released by early 2010; and

Whereas, investigations by independent researchers have reported that the outlet from Lake Huron into the St. Clair River has enlarged since 1970 due to riverbed erosion, and that this erosion is continuing on an annual basis causing an alleged permanent lowering of lakes Michigan-Huron of 12-18 inches in the nearly four decades since then; and

Whereas, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers dredged the upper St. Clair River in 1961-62 to deepen the channel from 25 feet to 27 feet, which was projected to result in a 5-inch permanent decline in lakes Michigan-Huron levels, and this projected decline was not remediated with structural measures due to the high water period from 1968-1999; and

Whereas, low water levels can lead to major economic loss across the region to maritime transportation, recreational boating, municipal water supply and power generation sectors of the economy; and

Whereas, water level fluctuations affect the sustainability, diversity and health of coastal wetlands, and restoring the health of coastal wetlands is a major strategic objective of the Great Lakes Regional Collaboration Strategy to Restore and Protect the Great Lakes.

Therefore, Be It Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission urges the U.S. and Canadian governments to provide funding to fully investigate the causes of water level decline in lakes Michigan and Huron, including detailed geophysical surveys at the head of the St. Clair River to determine erosion potential into the future; and

Be it Further Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission urges the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Environment Canada and the International Joint Commission to initiate investigations of potential remedial measures to ameliorate erosion in the upper St. Clair River; and

Be It Finally Resolved, that the Great Lakes Commission urges the IJC to expedite its investigation of changes in the Lake Huron outlet under the Upper Great Lakes Study with an interim report to the upper lakes states and the public by the end of 2008.

Presented for adoption at the 2007 Annual Meeting of the Great Lakes Commission, Chicago, Illinois, October 2, 2007.
